

Committee members, thank you for allowing me to speak,

My name is Tricia Stottele

I am the Operations Manager for The Family Puppy with locations in Novi, Troy and Flint Michigan. We are an independent, Michigan based small business. I grew up observing my mother and father, John and Debbie Stottele the owners, run the business they have built over 40 years. In February we celebrated our 20th year as a family owned business supplying happy, healthy and well-socialized puppies to many Michigan families.

By 2004, we were the leader in the pet community and changed the company to a "dog only" model in an effort to give full time dedication to the puppies in our care. Today, puppies are our main focus and our staff devotes their time to caring for these pets.

We believe that puppies deserve our full attention and this is evident in how we acquire and eventually place our puppies. We work closely with our breeders, acquiring them directly from them. Continuously meeting with our breeders has allowed us to have hands-on direction and oversight. This close working relationship, and the quarterly visits we conduct, have meant:

- Improved facilities
- Improved well-being of the animals
- Improved health and temperament of the dogs
- Improved health and quality of life for the breeding dogs

We are committed to continued improvement and the team of breeders we work with has met that challenge with us, always looking for way to improve the lives of the animals in their care.

I would like to briefly highlight a few of the many things we do as a resource for our customers and some of what we have accomplished in our years of operation.

- 1) Kennel design- We ensure our puppies have access to areas for unfettered play and exercise, comfortable bedding areas and well- ventilated enclosures that are climate appropriate.
- 2) We make sure they have plenty of opportunities to socialize and play with many other dogs. This setting allows caretakers to interact more often with them and is a huge benefit for positive temperament building, for both the parent dogs and the litters of puppies as they grow.
- 3) We began our "Health Clinics eight years ago in collaboration with the American Kennel Club. Through this process we perform genetic testing, screening for a genetic issues including: luxating patellas, heart murmurs, eye diseases and hip and elbow dysplasia in an effort to breed healthier dogs. Today, this is normal procedure and has reduced genetic defects to a rate of less than 1% of all of our puppies, ensuring the dogs have a healthier life with their new families.
- 4) While our own requirements are high, we partner with various third-party organizations to ensure we adhere to the highest standards. These include but aren't limited to: the USDA Animal Plant and Health Inspection Services, The American Kennel Club, and the Indiana Council for Animal Welfare Kennel Management Assistance. We don't believe you can find this level of oversight anywhere else, and our brick and mortar locations in Michigan means more oversight, unlike the uncertainty buying a puppy over the internet if we weren't around.
- 5) Something we are particularly proud of is our breeder's retirement and rehoming practice. We have reduced the length of time a female dog is bred, and improved their quality of life, transitioning them to a more social lifestyle with the kennel design and increased play-time. This socialization allows the dog to change from a kennel lifestyle to a home setting successfully.

For the past 2 years, we have been rehoming these breeding females in our stores and in most cases they have gone on to enjoy a decade as a loving companion pet. We will continue to champion this project and look forward to finding homes for even more of these breeding dogs.

Ultimately, temperament of a dog is both inherited and environmental, our goal is to continue finding ways to improve socialization and the health and well-being of our puppies and aim to ensure each home they go to is their forever home.

I believe that everyone in the state, including The Family Puppy, want what is best for its citizens and their dogs. Families of Michigan are looking for a safe place to come and learn what breed would be best for their kids... we can help! If you want to minimize the surrendering of unwanted pets... we can help!

I ask for your support so we, at The Family Puppy, can continue to raise the bar and offer happy, healthy, well socialized puppies as we have been doing for over 20 years and ensure that pet lovers have a safe and reputable choice when looking for their new furry family member.

Thank you for your time and your support and we will be happy to answer your questions.